
Annual Report of Director of Traffic

OF THE

District of Columbia :: 1927

ANNUAL REPORT
OF
THE DIRECTOR OF TRAFFIC
OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

1927



UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON
1927

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TRAFFIC OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, 1927

To the Commissioners of the District of Columbia:

Compared with previous years, traffic accidents in Washington during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1927, continued to show improvement, notwithstanding the increase in the number of cars and new drivers.

Traffic fatalities amounted to 78, as compared with 82 during 1926 and 86 during 1925.

There were 5,911 traffic accidents, as compared with 8,049 during 1926 and 9,378 during 1925. Thus it appears that during the past few years there has been a steady and consistent decrease not only in the number of traffic fatalities but also in the number of traffic accidents.

Twenty-two per cent of the fatalities and 23 per cent of the accidents were children under 14 years of age.

The chief causes of motor-vehicle accidents as based on the past year's experience are as follows:

- Reckless driving.
- Careless driving and walking.
- Pedestrians crossing street not at crosswalk and stepping from behind parked cars.
- Motorists failing to yield right of way.
- Driving under influence of liquor.
- Loss of control of vehicle and skidding.
- Playing in street.
- Backing and turning in street without giving proper signal.
- Pedestrians intoxicated.
- Cutting in.
- Defective brakes and steering gear.

As indicated in the previous year's report, the peak hours for accidents continue to be between 4 and 7 p. m. This corresponds with the afternoon peak hours of traffic.

A study of the year's accidents indicates that the majority occurred during daylight when the weather was clear and the road surface dry. About one-fifth of all accidents occurred on wet asphalt pavements, and about one-third of all accidents occurred at night.

OPERATORS' PERMITS ISSUED

Motor-vehicle operators' permits issued between August, 1903, and July 6, 1926, were renewed during the year for a three-year period. The amounts received for all permits during the fiscal year were as follows:

New permits, ¹ 343, at \$1 each-----	\$343. 00
New permits, 17,669, at \$3 each-----	53, 007. 00
Renewals, 90,802, at \$3 each-----	272, 406. 00
Duplicates, ² 1,773, at 50 cents each-----	886. 50
Total-----	326, 642. 50

In the renewal of these permits the records of all drivers were carefully searched. Where the drivers were found to have records involving serious infractions of the traffic law and regulations the permits were either canceled and renewal refused or the drivers called in for examination, depending upon the seriousness of the offenses.

COLOR-VISION TEST

To the regular examination involving vision tests and examination on the regulations, there has been added during the year a color-vision test to determine whether or not applicants for permits are color-blind.

REVOCATION AND SUSPENSION OF OPERATORS' PERMITS

During the year there were revoked and suspended 885 motor-vehicle operators' permits for the following reasons:

Driving while under the influence of liquor or drugs-----	400
Leaving after colliding-----	126
Reckless driving-----	94
Renewal of permits refused and old permits revoked or suspended-----	70
Bad records-----	63
Speeding-----	49
Right of foreign motorists to operate in the District of Columbia for various offenses-----	26
Miscellaneous offenses-----	28
Involved in traffic fatalities-----	16
Obtaining permits by fraud-----	9
Mentally unfit-----	4
Total-----	885

During the year 319 permits were restored.

The change in law giving the director of traffic and his assistant greater authority to cancel and suspend permits for any cause which may be deemed sufficient has enabled the office to promptly eliminate from the streets many drivers who for various reasons were found to be unsatisfactory. It is believed that the elimination of these drivers has to a considerable extent been responsible for improved traffic conditions during the past year.

ENFORCEMENT OF THE TRAFFIC LAW AND REGULATIONS

The director of traffic has received the full and hearty cooperation of the police department during the past year.

¹ These permits were issued during the period from July 1 to July 6, 1926, before the new law providing for the renewal program was put into operation.

² Ninety of these duplicates were issued during the period from July 1 to July 6.

The number of arrests for various traffic violations for 1927 as compared with 1926 is indicated in the following table:

Type of violation	Fiscal year 1926	Fiscal year 1927	Type of violation	Fiscal year 1926	Fiscal year 1927
Colliding.....	120	¹ 37	Parking abreast.....	2, 007	2, 258
Colliding and failing to stop.....	323	369	Parking overtime.....	7, 366	7, 205
Dazzling lights.....	301	26	Passing signals.....	1, 299	1, 123
Dead tags.....	237	289	Passing street cars.....	429	328
Driving on wrong side of street.....	281	203	Reckless driving.....	1, 767	1, 971
Driving while intoxicated.....	770	642	Violating light regulation.....	6, 048	2, 914
Failing to show permits.....	1, 098	882	Violating one-way street regula- tion.....	220	126
Loitering (public vehicles).....	66	46	Violating speed law.....	6, 728	5, 049
No District of Columbia tags.....	110	65	Violating other regulations.....	12, 859	10, 794
No District of Columbia permits.....	1, 317	1, 433			
Obstructing crosswalks.....	383	248			
Obstructing fire hydrants.....	127	120	Total.....	43, 856	36, 128

¹ The usual charge for colliding is reckless driving.

ELECTRIC TRAFFIC SIGNALS

During the year just closed the electric traffic-signal light system has been considerably extended.

A total of 80 signals was placed in operation, which brings the total number up to 158. These 80 signals are located as follows:

	Number
Sixteenth Street, from Euclid to Newton Streets.....	37
Massachusetts Avenue, from Seventh to Tenth Streets, including Mount Vernon Square.....	26
Rhode Island Avenue, at Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Seventeenth Street....	12
Fifteenth Street, New York and Pennsylvania Avenues (experimental installation).....	4
Twelfth and L Streets NW., 4-way signal (experimental).....	1
Total.....	80

Five flashing beacon safety-zone signals were also installed. Four of these are located on Connecticut Avenue between K Street and Dupont Circle, while one is located at Columbia Road and Eighteenth Street.

The results of the traffic-light installation continue to be marked by a steady decrease in the number of accidents on the streets or intersections controlled by these lights.

No fatalities have occurred on the streets or at the intersections where signal lights have been placed, and the number of accidents is very much less than at the same intersections during previous years and is very much less than on parallel streets where there are no traffic lights.

The installation of the lights has had the effect of actually speeding up the traffic on the streets and at the intersections where they have been installed.

There is now available from funds derived from the renewal of operators' permits a total of \$272,406, which it is planned to obligate, if possible, for additional traffic lights on some of the more important streets before the appropriation is exhausted on December 31, 1927.

Owing to the delays which may occur in advertising for bids, the letting of contracts, and the purchase of cable and equipment, it is

recommended that a request be made to Congress that the funds now available for this purpose shall remain available until expended for the purposes for which the funds were appropriated.

TRAFFIC SURVEY

An exhaustive traffic survey was conducted by this office, in cooperation with the National Park and Planning Commission, during June, 1927, at a cost of approximately \$3,600.

An excellent traffic-flow map has been prepared covering about 400 intersections on the more important thoroughfares throughout the District. This traffic count and flow map was urgently needed in the work of the office, especially in the studies being conducted to determine the streets on which traffic lights may be required.

It is highly desirable that a similar count be made at the same time each year in order to show any changes in traffic conditions in various parts of the District.

CERTIFICATE OF TITLE LAW

It is believed that the adoption of a certificate of title law for automobiles similar to that which has been adopted in 27 or more of the States would effectually destroy the market for stolen cars in the District.

The adoption of the law in these States has already had a marked effect in reducing the theft of automobiles and the cost of theft insurance.

I understand that a number of national organizations interested in this subject, as well as the Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice, favor the enactment of uniform certificate of title laws in all of the States and in the District of Columbia, and it is urgently recommended that such a law be enacted at the next session of Congress.

W. H. HARLAND,
Director of Traffic.

AUGUST 15, 1927.

○